

NEWS RELEASE

Alabama Department of Public Safety

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Alabama State Troopers to 'Take Back Our Highways' *Traffic Safety Initiative to Begin in August*

MONTGOMERY — The Alabama Department of Public Safety announced Thursday a new state trooper initiative to fight Alabama's increasing traffic fatalities. DPS Director Col. J. Christopher Murphy said the program, "Take Back Our Highways," will place all available troopers — from all divisions and all ranks — on patrol duty Aug. 13-17 in an intensive highway safety effort. Additional "Take Back Our Highways" intervals will be scheduled throughout the year.

Joining Murphy in announcing the program were District Attorney Ellen Brooks, Montgomery, and District Attorney Richard J. Minor, St. Clair County. The Alabama District Attorney's Association and Executive Director Randy Hillman have partnered with DPS in "Take Back Our Highways," said Murphy.

Murphy said the increase in Alabama traffic deaths — at their highest level since 1973 — prompted the initiative. Alabama traffic deaths rose more than 5 percent in 2006, to 1,208, when traffic deaths nationwide fell 2 percent. "At a time when traffic fatalities nationwide are on the decline, we cannot say the same is true for Alabama," said Murphy. "Tragically for our state and for all who share her highways, traffic fatalities in Alabama have increased."

Every available state trooper will be in uniform and on patrol during the program, including the addition of approximately 200 troopers normally assigned to duties other than patrol. "I will be taking Alabama Bureau of Investigation agents away from their normal duties for that week, and I will have Driver License troopers working the roads during that week.

"From Aviation, to our training academy, to the majors and captains who serve on my staff, every available trooper will be in uniform and on our highways Aug. 13-17," said Murphy. He said there will be some exceptions, including critical ABI investigations, court appearances, and protective details. The colonel said leave will be restricted during the period.

"The district attorneys of Alabama join with the Department of Public Safety's efforts to decrease vehicular fatalities," said Minor. "As prosecutors, we are all too familiar with the stories of drivers who have killed or caused serious injuries to themselves and other motorists on the roadways of Alabama due to speeding and aggressive driving. Furthermore, we have committed to the vigorous prosecution, as we do every day in courtrooms across our great state, of those who would ignore the warnings given today."

Troopers will target primary violations that cause crashes and contribute to more severe crashes, Murphy said. These include speeding, failure to yield the right of way, following too closely, driver inattention, and DUI. "We will engage in routine patrol, we will assist motorists, and we will aggressively enforce traffic laws," he said.

Throughout the state, troopers will target crash-prone areas and implement line patrols, saturation patrols, driver license checkpoints, and LIDAR details. Murphy said the public can expect to see a marked increase in the number of troopers on the road and a marked increase in the number of citations issued. "The goal is saving lives," said Murphy. "We believe that goal is worth the effort."

Murphy said Gov. Bob Riley and the Alabama Legislature's support have allowed Public Safety to hire additional troopers to supplement the state's ranks. "Thanks to Gov. Riley and the Legislature, we have a class of troopers in training now, we plan to hire a class in October, and we are implementing a long-term hiring program," said Murphy.

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